

Fifth meeting of the Victim Service Coordinating Council

(May 11, 2007)

Present: Nancy Barton, William Bilton, Hope Blackley, Vicki Bourus, Marvin Bryant, Dottie Cronise, Surleaner Lakin, Ashlie Lancaster, BJ Nelson, Tricia Phaup, Bob Rightsell, Veronica Swain.

Absent: Colleen Bozard, Barbara Grissom, Dean Kilpatrick, Sandi Wofford, Anne Wolf.

The meeting began with an update from the Compensation Workgroup. There had been unanimous agreement by the VSCC on proposed changes to the compensation legislation (presented to the council on March 29, 2007). The workgroup is planning to attach that proposal to the Standards Workgroup's proposal currently under deliberation by the VSCC for submission to the legislature.

Dana briefly summarized some of the information that had been forwarded to her by the Safety & Accountability Audit Workgroup. She further noted that she had attended a week-long audit training in Duluth and had been trained as a coordinator. She has lots of materials (e.g., manuals, DVD video clips, worksheets, samples) that may be helpful to the workgroup. It was noted that responders in Spartanburg had recently completed an audit which produced real systemic changes and positive results. These persons might be a resource to the VSCC as discussion of audits continues.

Prior to moving into extended discussion of the Standards Workgroup's proposal, the VSCC chose to address remaining issues regarding how the Council would proceed after this meeting and into the coming fiscal year. It was decided that most business necessary for completion of the final project report could be completed at this meeting and in email communications, and that this would be the last meeting of the VSCC in this fiscal year. There was consensus that the beginning of the next fiscal year would be a good time to transition to the structure and processes proposed for the Council in the draft standards legislation. This will involve addition of several members as well as establishment of self-governance and voting procedures. A subcommittee was established to draft some preliminary bylaws to introduce at the first meeting of the Council next fiscal year. The committee (Bob, Ashlie, Dottie, & Marvin; Colleen emailed that she is interested) was encouraged to keep the bylaws simple. It was decided that Ashlie, in her role as funder, should be in charge of calling the first meeting. Regarding level and type of staff support that would be needed for the VSCC next year, VSCC members indicated that the research support had been helpful and that they preferred such facilitation that was independent from the Council (e.g., versus facilitation by SOVA).

Hope provided an update on a project that had been previously mentioned at VSCC meetings. SC was being considered as a participant in a national evaluation in which several sites from around the nation will be selected. The project will yield a report with recommendations. She has gotten word that, based on interviews with SC providers,

they believe that SC will be an excellent site to be included in this project. Hope will provide a copy of the initial report to the VSCC upon its release. It was also noted that a valuable method for keeping abreast of developing issues and gaps in SC victim services is to routinely collect and review news articles pertaining to crime victims in our state.

Discussion of the Standards Workgroup proposal began with information concerning membership of the VSCC. The summary court seat that had been suggested at the last meeting was eliminated in light of communication with representatives who indicated such a seat would present a conflict of interest. A seat for a representative of campus services was added. The VSCC discussed presence of both campus service providers and researchers on the Council. To add flexibility that would allow both types of representation on the VSCC, one of the proposed NGO seats was changed to a general at-large seat (this still leaves two NGO at-large seats as well as other NGO seats on the Council). There was agreement from the Council that these changes were acceptable.

Vicki presented some language unanimously proposed by her SCCADVASA-member directors to accommodate certification of nonprofit domestic violence and sexual assault service providers. She emphasized importance of non-governmental organizations' remaining outside of the system. There was some discussion regarding whether this was divisive by separating out one group of providers from others, and there was concern regarding path to certification for non-DV/SA nonprofit providers. It was noted that the proposed language was a compromise that presented a reasonable chance for this legislation to be accepted. Veronica reported that she had sought input from other nonprofits, and that those she was able to talk to had expressed support for the original standards proposal. There was discussion as to whether government entities could require nonprofits to be certified, and it was noted that the proposal in its current form did not impose penalties for noncompliance. There was discussion of developing memoranda of understanding between SCCADVASA and member agencies to promote use of a SCCADVASA-administered certification program. After much discussion, language was proposed to refer to 1) certification of public entities through the Office of Education & Certification and 2) certification of private/nonprofit entities through "any VSCC-approved certification program," with training of such programs being reviewed to ensure comparability to the state-administered certification. There was unanimous agreement by the Council that this was acceptable language if SCCADVASA members agreed. Vicki will check with her member/directors to verify their acceptance and will provide the Council with a response within a week. VSCC members expressed contentment regarding consensus on this issue, in that it is a substantial accomplishment with potential to benefit victims and providers.

A new issue was introduced regarding a proposed edit to Bill 3129. It was suggested that language be added to state "upon conviction of the offender, a copy of the victim information sheet must be forwarded to the receiving authority." There was consensus to accept the edit and attach this with the VSCC's other proposed legislation.

There was discussion of several suggestions by the Legislative Audit Committee. First, the LAC had suggested that the Victim Advocate Policy Committee be dissolved and its

functions transferred to either the VSCC or the Commission on Prosecution Coordination. There was consensus from the VSCC that these duties would be more appropriately situated within the CPC. William will assist Dana in preparing a letter to the Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee to notify him of the VSCC's decision.

There was discussion regarding LAC's (p.31) suggestions regarding amending the audit proviso (e.g., notifying SOVA & SCCA of completed audits, allowing input from SOVA and others around selection of audit sites, following up on deficiencies identified through audits, authorizing SOVA to conduct programmatic reviews of victim service agencies, and having SOVA and the VSCC develop guidelines around appropriate expenditures of victim service funds). VSCC unanimously supported these amendments. This will be stated in the final VSCC report as well as in a letter to the appropriate legislator.

Tricia presented a draft prepared by the Safety & Accountability Audit Workgroup. She noted that they'd modified language to address all types of crimes (versus typical language addressing only domestic violence). They'd proposed hiring a consultant to help train audit teams, and they've prepared an application for pilot audit sites (one urban and one rural) to be included in an audit. VSCC members suggested that SOVA might apply for OJP funds for these pilot audits.

A new issue was introduced that an emerging nonprofit had selected a name very similar to the VSCC's (the SC Crime Victims' Council) and that this had already begun creating confusion among providers. It was discussed that the VSCC will make concerted efforts to increase visibility to promote public awareness of the VSCC as its own entity. Public awareness might be an issue addressed early in the next fiscal year. Further, there should be a press conference around VSCC-proposed legislative changes if these are approved. Ashlie will delegate a SOVA graphic-artist staff member to design some sample logos for the VSCC, and Dana will look into getting some letterhead made during this fiscal year. The final report can thereby be presented to the General Assembly and to stakeholders on VSCC letterhead. Dana noted she'd had difficulty compiling a list of stakeholders given limited lists provided thus far, and BJ noted that she would send a complete list from DPS to assist.

Dana will prepare the final VSCC report and submit it for quick-turnaround review and refinements from VSCC members prior to submitting it to SOVA. She will also send VSCC member evaluation forms. VSCC members will receive further communications with relevant updates until the first meeting of next fiscal year.